

CALIFORNIA WILDLIFE HABITAT RELATIONSHIPS SYSTEM
maintained by the
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
and supported by the
CALIFORNIA INTERAGENCY WILDLIFE TASK GROUP
Database Version 8.1 (2005)

R035 Island Night Lizard *Xantusia riversiana*
Family: Xantusiidae Order: Squamata Class: Reptilia

Written by: R. Marlow
Reviewed by: T. Papenfuss
Edited by: R. Duke, J. Harris

DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

The island night lizard is presently known from three of the Channel Islands off the coast of southern California: San Clemente, Santa Barbara and San Nicolas. It may occur on other Channel Islands and has been reported from Santa Catalina, but these reports have not been substantiated (Stebbins 1954). These three islands provide a variety of habitats from coastal strand and sand dunes to chaparral and woodlands, and the lizards are found in all habitats that provide cover in great abundance (Stebbins 1954, Mautz and Case 1974).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: This species is omnivorous. It eats insects (silverfish, caterpillars, moths, ants, etc.), plants (up to 50% by volume) and possibly small mammals (Schwenkmeyer 1949, Knowlton 1949, Brattstrom 1952, Stebbins 1954). This lizard seems to be a food generalist and opportunist, taking advantage of whatever food source is available in an environment with few, if any, competitors.

Cover: This species, like other members of this family, makes extensive use of cover. It is seldom observed on the surface in the open, but usually under objects or moving through thick vegetation, or around cover. It utilizes prostrate plant cover, the extensive patches of Opuntia or ice plant found on these islands, as well as rocks, logs and rubble (Stebbins 1954). Adequate cover in the form of vegetation, rock rubble, logs or other objects is probably the most important habitat requirement.

Reproduction: This lizard is live-bearing. Nothing is known concerning the habitat requirements for reproduction. It is obvious that some sort of secure cover is required during the birthing process, which may take up to several hours.

Water: Nothing is known concerning water requirements. Water in the form of dew and fog-drip is often present on the islands and captives are known to drink, but there are few sources of permanent water available.

Pattern: This species is secretive, extensively utilizing cover both when active and inactive. It occurs in a wide variety of habitats and seems to be limited only by available cover.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: It is likely that lizards can be active at any time of the year when temperatures are mild to warm. On Santa Barbara Island, 85% of captures were from March-September (Fellers 1981). There is confusion about the daily activity patterns of these animals. They have been reported as both nocturnal and diurnal (Van Denburgh 1919, Mautz

and Case 1974). On Santa Barbara Island lizards were observed in May between 0800 and 1400 hrs actively foraging at the base of a rock outcrop under vegetation. It seems likely that these animals are active under cover during the day when temperatures are mild to warm and are crepuscular when temperatures are hot.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: None.

Home Range: No data on home range. Only data on density located was a pitfall study on Santa Barbara Island, where 127 individuals (213 captures) were obtained in 13,732 trap-days (Fellers 1981).

Territory: No data.

Reproduction: Little is known of reproduction in this live-bearing species. There are 3-9 young per brood (Stebbins 1954). Copulation probably occurs in early spring and parturition in late summer (Stebbins 1954).

Niche: No data.

REFERENCES

- Brattstrom, B. H. 1952. The food of the night lizards, genus *Xantusia*. *Copeia* 1952: 168-172.
- Fellers, G. M. 1981. A study of the life history of the island night lizard. Page 140 in Biannual Report No. 5, Coop. Nat. Park Service Unit, CPSU/UC 014/2, University of California, Davis.
- Knowlton, G. 1949. Food of the island night lizard. *Herpetologica* 5:45-46.
- Mautz, W. J., and T. J. Case. 1974. A diurnal activity cycle in the granite night lizard, *Xantusia henshawi*. *Copeia* 1974:243-251.
- Schwenkmeyer, R. 1949. Food habits of the island night lizard, *Xantusia riversiana reticulata*, from San Clemente Island. *Nat. Hist. Misc. Chicago Acad. Sci.* 38:1-3.
- Stebbins, R. C. 1954. *Amphibians and reptiles of western North America*. McGraw-Hill, New York. 536pp.
- Van Denburgh, J. 1919. A note on *Xantusia riversiana*. *Copeia* 1919:91-92.